

Alaska Department of Natural Resources
Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation

**Channel Islands State Marine Park Management Plan
Public Meeting – September 23, 2009
Comments on Public Review Draft**

Meeting Summary

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (“Alaska State Parks”) hosted a public meeting on Wednesday, September 23, 2009, at Centennial Hall in Juneau, Alaska, to hear public comments on a draft management plan for the Channel Islands State Marine Park. Seventeen people attended.

The public asked questions and offered comments about the draft plan during the meeting; written comments were requested by early October. The State Park Advisory Board and Alaska State Parks staff will consider public comments in developing the final plan, which will be completed in November.

Introduction

The meeting began with a short presentation regarding the public review draft of the Channel Islands State Marine Park Management Plan. The draft management plan will: (1) identifies appropriate sites for some types of development (e.g., future cabins; campsite hardening; access improvements); (2) provides guidance for resource protection; (3) addresses public information and education; and (4) describes a process for how other proposed developments, uses and activities would be evaluated in more detail in the future.

Public Comments

The public offered the following comments at the September 23 meeting:

- Resource information about the park
 - Alaska State Parks should serve as a repository for resource inventory and other information about the fish, wildlife, vegetation, cultural and other resources of the park
 - It is important for park managers to be well-acquainted with the park’s values and be able to provide interpretive information for the public
 - Research should be encouraged
 - The resource inventory section of the plan should be expanded; more detailed information about sensitive resources would provide justification for management actions
- Increasing visitation to the islands will bring potential increase in impacts

Some in attendance felt that park status and increasing public education/interpretation will attract additional visitation; others did not expect a substantial increase in public use. Mike Eberhardt, Park Superintendent, noted that the park status provides additional authority for state management of public uses; however, the Division did not receive additional funding for monitoring or enforcement. The following comments were offered:

- There is already a substantial garbage problem on the islands; concern that this will become worse with increased use (regardless of attempts at public education). (Note: In May 2009, 11 large bags of garbage were collected in the vicinity of the Hand Troller Cove cabin.)
- Alaska State Parks must increase monitoring of public behavior, if they are going to encourage increased recreation use; concern that there will not be adequate monitoring and law enforcement
- Alaska State Parks needs to get the community and organizations to help address garbage and other impacts from use
- Suggest “No Action” policy; do not encourage increased public use
- Park management will address the use that is already occurring and reduce impacts; public education is imperative
- Private property
 - Private property owners on Shelter Island are concerned that increasing public use will increase impacts to the island resources; the public does not always respect private property (e.g., litter, human waste, trespassing)
 - The plan needs to include a statement regarding private lands (inholdings and adjacent)
 - Install signs at the park boundary, so people are aware when they are approaching private land
- Channel Islands SMP resources and values
 - Benjamin Island / sea lions
 - Sea lion haul out on Benjamin Island needs appropriate management; sea lions are regularly disturbed by people approaching on land and in boats
 - Four respondents favor no development (cabin, trail, hardened campsite) on Benjamin Island
 - One respondent favored hardening the campsite on Benjamin Island; people will continue to camp there – less impact if the site is hardened
 - Two respondents recommended installation of an improved trail and viewing blind, in consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)
 - Protect areas important to black oystercatchers and other seabirds; no development or encouragement of increased public use in these areas
 - Consider prohibiting pets in sensitive habitat areas (suggestions: Benjamin, north Portland, Bird, Gull)

- Install signs to encourage people to stay out of (and keep dogs out of) sensitive habitat areas
- The public needs to be educated/reminded about penalties enforced by NMFS for marine mammal harassment (including sea lions)
- Consider discouraging public visitation to Bird and Gull Islands, except for research or other special use
- Facility development for public use
 - Camp sites
 - Hardening camp sites will be a benefit to high use areas
 - Design standards for hardened camp sites should provide substantial separation between tent sites
 - Four respondents recommended no camp site improvements on Benjamin Island; one respondent favored hardening this site as a way to reduce impacts from camping that is expected to continue
 - Cabins
 - US Forest Service is having difficulty maintaining its cabins; why build new ones in the vicinity? (Note: Staff noted that the existing State Park cabins are fully occupied April through September).
 - Providing public cabins will expand use in the vicinity of each
 - Regarding cabin on Benjamin Island – Four respondents recommended no cabin on Benjamin Island
 - Mooring buoys
 - It will be very difficult to install and maintain mooring buoys; liability issue
- Trapping
 - Several people raised concerns about trapping in the park (safety for pets and young children); however, the legislation specifically allows trapping to occur in the park
- Commercial use of the park
 - Plan should include more detailed information about how an application for commercial use of the island(s) would be addressed by Alaska State Parks. What types of commercial use would be considered appropriate? Where? At what levels of use? (Provide a “rough outline” of the Alaska State Park’s approach to decision regarding commercial permit.)
 - Commercial uses and activities should be severely limited
 - Is a permit needed to provide remote site pick-up and drop-off for park visitors? (See page 7 of draft plan)

- Public education and information
 - It is imperative to provide additional public education about how to recreate in the park while protecting its resources
 - Public education should include information about endangered or sensitive species (at the appropriate level of detail), so the public sees the importance of protecting these resources
 - The public must be made aware of the hazards involved in accessing the park; marine boating experience is needed, changeable weather, hazards, etc.

Next Steps & Schedule

- Early November 2009: Juneau State Park Advisory Board meeting to consider final plan; public comment opportunity at meeting
- November 2009: Final plan available for viewing online

For more information:

Project web site:

<http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/plans/channelisland/channelisimp.htm>

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